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Looking back, my depression and anxiety symptoms started during pregnancy with my son. I had experienced pregnancy loss prior to getting pregnant again and I was not coping well with the anxiety I was experiencing. I was afraid of losing our son and felt I had little control. Even though the pregnancy was planned, I was fearful and anxious throughout the entire process. During my pregnancy, I did not realize that the symptoms I had would be considered a peri-natal mood disorder and I did not reach out for help. Also, I think I was afraid of being considered a moody and demanding pregnant woman. I had been around so many other women who loved pregnancy and I felt bad I hated the entire process.

Following periods of bed rest, I had a difficult birth. I was admitted to the hospital three-and-a-half weeks before his due date after I was diagnosed with preeclampsia. I labored off and on for three days and pushed for almost five hours. He was certainly not ready to be born! Following my son's birth, he was hospitalized an additional four days due to jaundice. The labor and delivery were traumatic, and, as a result, I became very wary of getting pregnant again. I probably have experienced some PTSD from the experience.

After my traumatic birth experience, our homecoming just did not fit with what I had imagined for myself. Even though my husband is wonderfully supportive, a great coach and a fully involved dad, he had to return to work within three days of coming home before having extended paternity leave. The other people, who were supporting me, were not really what I needed. I was having a lot of trouble with recovery; nursing was difficult as my milk supply was very low. It was all such a huge let down for me. I felt like I had failed our son entirely. All of these issues were compounding my feelings of depression and anxiety, starting with my pregnancy.

I began having anxiety surrounding his sleeping patterns. I felt anxious and could not sleep when he was sleeping, and I also really wanted to sleep when he was awake. I dreaded being alone. I would cry, begging my husband not to go to work. My mother, who lives out of the area, realized what was going on and was able to provide short term assistance, which helped a lot.

My difficulties with nursing went on for weeks, as I tried to nurse, pump and supplement. I tried everything to improve my milk supply. My mother finally came to me and said it would be OK to admit that I couldn't nurse. She said, "It does not make you a bad mom, it just means that your body does not want to cooperate." I finally made the decision to stop and switch to formula. Still, I felt very self-conscious and would dread the looks I received in public as I gave my infant a bottle prepared with formula. It was excruciating sometimes! Even today, I am sensitive and experience a lot of guilt about not being about to nurse him in his first year.

All of these unexpected challenges and symptoms compounded and started a downward spiral. I started having suicidal ideation and scary intrusive and repetitive thoughts when he was about 4 or 5 weeks old. The suicidal ideation really frightened me and I reached out to good friend. She pushed me to contact my midwife, who was wonderful and had me in the office within hours, screened me for post-partum depression and suggested I start an anti-depressant and anti-anxiety medication. She also gave me information about Baby Blues Connection and encouraged me to contact the organization.

I think it was my husband, who first contacted BBC. The group facilitator called back within twenty-four hours and invited me to the next support group. It was such a relief to talk to someone who knew exactly what I was experiencing. I did not need to hide that I was experiencing suicidal thoughts or the repetitive intrusive thoughts.

I had been attending a mommy-and-me group and felt it was not the right place for me; I was not making connections with the other moms. As soon I went to the BBC group, I immediately clicked with the group and felt better. I was not alone and I could talk to someone without being afraid that I was being labeled.

I attended group for a while and about the time my son was eighteen months old I finally started feeling normal again. I did not have to force myself to get out of bed nor feel that my son was a chore. I credit the **combination** of the midwife, medication, support group and seeing a psychologist as the key to getting better. Without my midwife, I would never have been diagnosed, or the diagnosis would have been delayed, worsening the symptoms and delaying recovery. Without BBC, I would have felt incredibly more alone in what I was experiencing. BBC brought the medication and psychological aspects together for me and really provided an opportunity to relate to others who were going through the exact same thing.

When I started feeling significantly better, I weaned off the medication. There was a slight reoccurrence of anxiety symptoms when my son was about two years old, but it was not full blown. It was a reminder that I would still have good and bad days over the course of my recovery, but I could cope.

If I had it all to do all over again, I would invest in a postpartum doula and I would not have set myself up with such high expectations and unreasonable demands, as I cared for my newborn and recovered from the birth.